

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 5 are amended. Claims 40-61 are added. Claims 1-20 and 40-61 are in the application for consideration.

All claims stand rejected as being obvious over a combination of Srinivasan et al. in view of Kobayashi et al. Independent claim 1 has been amended to recite that the subject exposing occurs within a plasma chamber comprising a substrate receiver and a powerable electrode spaced therefrom by at least 0.1 inch, and with the substrate being received by the receiver, and by injecting a nitrogen comprising gas to within the chamber and with the electrode generating said nitrogen-containing plasma. Such subject matter added to claim 1 is within the first stated species provided by the Examiner, and elected by the Applicant. Further, support for such added language can be filed in Applicant's specification as-filed at, for example, p.11, ln.3 – p.12, ln.21. Accordingly, no new matter is added. Srinivasan et al. does not disclose plasma generation. Kobayashi et al. is seen to be silent as respects the added portion to Applicant's independent claim 1. As neither reference suggests this added attribute, the references in combination do not suggest the independent claim 1 combination as herein presented. Accordingly, claim 1 should be allowed, and action to that end is requested.

Claim 5 is rewritten in independent form, but is otherwise of the same scope as originally submitted. Claim 5 recites forming the silicon oxide comprising layer on the silicon nitride comprising layer, with the silicon

oxide comprising layer including a portion which is everywhere received elevationally over the silicon nitride comprising layer. Exposing and forming of the silicon nitride therefrom is further stated to transform all of such portion to silicon nitride. Such is neither shown nor suggested by the cited references whether taken alone or in combination.

For example with respect to the Kobayashi et al. reference, such is only understood to teach transformation of only the surface region of a silicon dioxide film to a silicon nitride layer, and specifically not teach (and teaches against) transforming all of a silicon dioxide layer or portion received over another layer to silicon nitride (see, for example, col.8, Ins.9-14). Accordingly, Kobayashi et al. does not disclose this particular facet of Applicant's independent claim 5.

Regarding Srinivasan et al., the specific teaching regarding layers 20 and 50 is that such constitutes silicon in elemental form. This is clear from col.3, Ins.38-47 wherein the exemplary layer is deposited using only silane as a precursor. Further, the language appearing at col.4, Ins.48-57 can only reasonably be construed as respects an alternate to "silicon" as specifically teaching some alternate elemental form comprising layer. Further, and specifically, the teaching of Srinivasan et al. is to take an elemental silicon layer and rapid thermal nitridize it to form, from an elemental silicon layer, silicon nitride material. In other words, an elemental layer is combined with another element to form a compound layer. However, Applicant's claims are directed to taking a specific compound layer (silicon oxide) and combining the same with a nitrogen-containing plasma to transform the first compound

into another, different compound. Accordingly, one compound is being formed into another compound in the context of Applicant's claim 5, where the Srinivasan et al. teaching is to combine an elemental form layer with another element to form a compound.

Further, the teaching with respect to Srinivasan et al. is to take silicon (a semiconductive material) and form therefrom a dielectric material (silicon nitride). Applicant's claim, on the other hand, is specific to taking a dielectric material (silicon dioxide) and transforming it to another dielectric material (silicon nitride).

Accordingly, the combined teachings of Srinivasan et al. with Kobayashi et al. could only extend to forming an outermost portion of a silicon oxide layer in accordance with the Kobayashi et al. teaching, not transforming all of the stated portion of Applicant's claim to silicon nitride. Accordingly, independent claim 5 is seen to be patentably distinguished over the combination of Srinivasan et al. with Kobayashi et al., and such claim should be allowed. Action to that end is requested.

Each of independent claims 8 and 15 recite that at least some silicon oxide remains within the previously formed pinholes. Kobayashi et al. in no way discloses or refers to pinholes. Srinivasan et al., on the other hand, completely fills its pinholes with silicon nitride comprising material. As neither reference teaches keeping some silicon oxide to remain within previously formed pinholes, it is inconceivable that the combination of such references could suggest at least this aspect of Applicant's independent claims 8 and 15. Claims 8 and 15 should accordingly be allowed for their

combinational stated features over Srinivasan et al. and Kobayashi et al. Accordingly, the rejection should be withdrawn, and claims 8 and 15 should be allowed. Action to that end is requested.

Claims 40-61 are added, all of which are dependent upon existing claims. Support for the same is inherent in Applicant's application as-filed, for example, in one aspect as asserted above at p.11, ln.3 – p.12, ln.21. Accordingly, no new matter is added.

Each of Applicant's dependent claims should be allowed as depending from allowable base claims, and for their own recited features which are neither shown nor suggested in the cited art. Action to that end is requested.

This application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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